(b) whether Government agrees with the US interpretation of the UNSC resolutions regarding deployment of third country troops in Iraq at this point of time; and

(c) what further clarifications, if any, have been sought from the USA and the United Nations by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes. Based on these consultations, as well as other relevant factors, Government reached the decision that, were there to be an explicit U.N. mandate for the purpose the Government of India could consider the deployment of our troops in Iraq.

(b) and (c) there are divergent approaches and varying interpretations of the UNSC Resolution 1483 with regard to deployment of third country troops in Iraq. The Government is monitoring developments in the U.N. in this regard.

Laying of Afghan Roads

2007. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA:
SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India propose to lay Afghan roads;

(b) if so, the request received in this connection from the Afghan Government; and

(c) by when the work would be undertaken by Border Road Organisation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) Yes. As part of India's extensive humanitarian, financial and project assistance to Afghanistan, it is proposed to undertake road construction in Afghanistan. During several bilateral interactions with Afghanistan, the Afghan Government has urged India to provide assistance in infrastructure sector, including laying of roads.

In a trilateral meeting held between India, Afghanistan and Iran on 4-5 January, 2003 at Tehran to discuss the development of transit and transport between the three countries, a Memorandum of Understanding on the Development and Construction of Transit and Transport Infrastructures in Chabahar-Mailak-Zaranj-Delaram route had been signed between the three countries aimed at improving access to Afghanistan, and upgrading the infrastructure at Chabahar port and relevant road segments. During the visit of President of Afghanistan, H.E. Mr. Hamid Karzai to India, in March this year, Prime Minister announced a financial commitment of US$70 million for the construction of Zaranj-Delaram road in Afghanistan.

A detailed technical survey of the Zaranj-Delaram road stretch has been completed by Border Roads Organization. Implementation will commence after the report on the execution of the project has been approved by the Government from the technical and financial angles.

Observation of Protest day by officers in RPOs

2008. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the officers in the Regional Passport Offices all over the country observed a protest day by working an extra day on Saturday, the 31st May, 2003 to press for their demands; and

(b) if so, the details of their demands and the Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) As part of the strike threat issued by the All India Passport Employees Association (AIPEA), some of its members observed a protest day by working on Saturday, May 31, 2003. The AIPEA is an association of non-gazetted employees of the Central Passport Organisation (CPO) and does not have offices of the CPO on its membership.

2. The AIPEA has gone on strike on several occasions since its recognition in 1998. The agitation in May, 2003 had its origin in the refusal of the AIPEA to allow transfer of its members on the basis of